

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY  
 PRESS CONFERENCE, WITH GENERAL JOHN SHALIKASHVILI, CHAIRMAN, JCS  
 Port-AU-PRINCE, HAITI  
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SEC. PERRY: -- the same understanding of their mission and to determine whether there are additional resources they need to carry out their mission successfully.

We have been enormously impressed with the skill with which this operation has been executed. This is a consequence of the clear vision of the commanders and the competence and the enthusiasm of the troops who are here. Now we are here and established with more than 12,000 troops on the ground. To date, this operation has gone amazingly well. But we are prepared for difficult times ahead.

Our troops here have a very difficult task of working two related missions. First, they have come here as friends and not invaders. That will be manifested to the people of Haiti by the assistance we bring them, the food, medicine, supplies, bringing their electricity up, all of the ways that we can help get them back on their feet again; and just as importantly, by the behavior and attitude and the friendship demonstrated by American forces as individuals towards the Haitians that they meet.

The other half of their mission is to restore security and stability to this country and to create an environment in which the legal government can return on October the 15th. We expect to do that with several different approaches; first of all, and most importantly, by being here with overwhelming force so that that force itself is a deterrent to violence that may otherwise occur; secondly, by having more than 1,000 military police that will be working to oversee and monitor the function of the Haitian police to be sure that proper professionalism is being demonstrated and there is not overreaction and violence in performing their duties; finally, by having a

quick reaction force which consists of our combat troops, including a company of Bradley vehicles which can be called upon to deal with any emergency that could develop.

These conflicting demands of the missions place very heavy and exacting demands on our troops and on our commanders here, on the professionalism and discipline of the troops and of the skill of the commanders. And I have every confidence that our commanders have those skills and that our troops will demonstrate that professionalism and discipline.

I have talked with hundreds of our troops today. They are proud of the job that they have done to date, and I am proud of what they have done. Last Saturday President Clinton held a video teleconference system in which we talked with all of the commanders in the field so that he can make a personal evaluation of the readiness to perform this mission.

At the end of that conference he said -- having asserted his confidence in the readiness, he went on to say how proud he was of the capability of the American military force and that he wished that the entire public and all the American public could have participated in that conference so they could develop the same confidence that he had in the quality and the capability of the American military. I believe the American people can be truly proud of the military forces they have here in Haiti.

Now I'd like to turn it over to General Shalikashvili before we field questions.

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: Well, I know that you're all very anxious to ask questions and not listen to us. But since I've got you all captive here, I have to tell you that I can't help but stand here with an extraordinary amount of pride; pride and deep, deep appreciation for everything that's been done from the senior commander, Admiral Miller, to General Shelton, the senior commander here on the scene, Dave Meade and others, down to the lowest second lieutenant, and from the most senior command sergeant major here to the newest private.

When you talk to those leaders, when you look at the planning that they have done, when you look at how they've overseen the execution these last six days and all the many

weeks leading up to these last five days, when you talk to the privates, walking guards, the sergeants who watch out for their welfare, you know that America sent its first team over here. And they're acting like it.

And so the only caution I would have for all of you; these have been extraordinarily successful six days, but these are just the first six days in a long number of days yet to come. And so you from the press, you in uniform standing here, you listening, remember that there is still the unexpected out there, the unknown that we have to be ready for. And so we have to stay mentally sharp and physically fit and ready in the days to come, just like you have been in the last five days. And I thank you from the bottom of my heart on behalf of the joint chiefs and all the leaders in the military, and I wish you all the very best.

And I think with that, we're ready for your questions.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

Q: Mr. Secretary, there's been talk of --

Q: The last time U.S. peacekeepers were in a foreign land, they took some casualties because they did not get the support that they needed from the White House and a political decision was made not to give them all the weapons that they needed to accomplish their mission, and lives were lost. Can you guarantee the soldiers that are here that that is not going to happen, that they are going to receive everything they need so that they will be as safe as they can be under these circumstances?

SEC. PERRY: Without accepting the premise of your question, let me take the answer to the question, which is that yes, I can guarantee that anything our soldiers need, our commanders need --

(Approximately one-minute audio break.)

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: -- and to structure then ourselves for the unexpected and be ready. I think we are, and I feel very confident that we have the force here, structured, trained and led to be ready.

Q: There's been much negotiating with General Cedras. He has agreed to step down. But the last we've heard is he says he's not going to be leaving Haiti. What is the U.S. position on this? And have you completed your

talks with him on his leaving Haiti, or is this an ongoing process?

SEC. PERRY: General Shelton is not negotiating with General Cedras. General Shelton is discussing with General Cedras and informing him what he is doing in bringing his force into the island and achieving the security and stability that's necessary. There will be political and diplomatic discussions with General Cedras relative to his leaving the island. Our position on that has consistently been, number one, the agreement does not demand that he leave the island. Number two, we believe he should and we believe that he will. Maybe Ambassador Swing will want to comment further on that.

Q: Is there a real date for the return of Aristide in Haiti?

SEC. PERRY: I will give you an estimate, but this is -- obviously this is for President Aristide to determine. But the last time I talked with him, he indicated he was anxious to come back and he planned to come back as soon as possible after October the 15th. I think it'll be very soon after that.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you and the general are both warning about the unexpected et al. Is there any particular reason? Did you get intelligence that while everything looks so smooth, behind the scenes something bad might be planned by an enemy?

SEC. PERRY: Military planners prudently expect the worst and plan for the worst. And then if it happens, they're ready for it. And then if it doesn't happen, they are accused of having overreacted. Those of you who were at this airfield Monday morning saw our combat forces landing in full combat gear and crouching in combat position, and it seemed a little ridiculous because they were being received with open arms. It was a prudent, cautious measure expecting the worst and hoping for the best.

General, would you like to comment on that?

Q: Were you surprised with the reaction that U.S. troops received when they arrived here in Haiti?

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: No, I was not surprised by the reaction. I was very gratified that what we thought would happen, in fact, did happen. But as Secretary Perry just said,

we have all known examples when people assumed that everything was going well and then it wasn't. And I think it's very useful to remind each other, whenever we get together like this, to always be ready. That's our job.

Q: Mr. Secretary, when do you expect the multinational force to come into Haiti? And will their introduction allow U.S. forces to begin to withdraw?

SEC. PERRY: I expect small numbers of multinational forces to be in here in a short time, within a week or two. But the major buildup of multinational forces will be later, in October and November. And yes, we require the buildup of those forces so that American forces can withdraw. We also require that the security situation stabilizes. Both those factors have to happen for American forces to withdraw.

We would like to go as quickly as possible from the multinational force to the U.N. force, that transition, which can happen sometime, we hope, early next year.

Q: Sir, can you explain why U.S. forces did not act to stop Haitian-on-Haitian violence today when Haitians at the military headquarters were tear gassed and beaten?

SEC. PERRY: I think you're asking me to comment on a press report that I've seen. I have no independent information that any of our troops saw that or can even confirm that it happened. I'm not saying it did not happen; I'm just saying I do not have that information. Our forces have very clear instructions that if they see, if they observe an overreaction, an excess reaction, excess violence on the part of the Haitian police, that they should take action. I have no information that they have observed that.

Q: Mr. Secretary, do you have an end date for the mission?

SEC. PERRY: I can't really set an end date. We have a set of end conditions for the mission and we hope to achieve those conditions in a matter of a few months. It certainly is not going to be weeks. It's going to be a matter of a few months. And it's certainly not a year or two. So it's a few months. And it depends on what happens in the island and how successful we are in establishing this secure environment, how quickly we can leave. But it also, as I said,

depends on how quickly the multinational force can come up.

Q: Next week you will have military police stationed in police precincts in the city. What specific steps will they be able to take to prevent mob violence and mob justice?

SEC. PERRY: I'm going to let General Shali answer that one.

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: Well, the main purpose is there to ensure that they know what the police is doing, to ensure that if there is something that's ongoing somewhere, we know about it as well. And we, through our presence, can mitigate the behavior of both the military force and the police force and also the crowd. And so it is simply to ensure that we're fully in the know what the police is all about.

Q: Secretary Perry --

SEC. PERRY: I would make one other comment on that, and I would urge the press and the public to be a little restrained in the Monday morning quarterbacking. Our force is going in and monitoring and overseeing the Haitian police. Our military police just came in force a few days ago. They were not in the first wave. The first wave that came in had the combat troops. They've only been here a few days.

We will have about 1,000 of them by tomorrow. And they are going to start fanning out and going to the individual police -- what we call precincts. That operation has to evolve over the next few days before we are in a position to maintain effective control; so a little patience and a little avoiding Monday morning quarterback while we bring this very difficult and complex operation up to its full effectiveness.

Q: Mr. Secretary, as you and the general --

Q: (Inaudible.)

SEC. PERRY: I couldn't hear the question. Try it again, please.

Q: (About?) the general. What about the situation in Port-au-Prince now? (Inaudible) -- Haitian soldiers to people. (Inaudible) -- there was something that was happening. There was some people on the street and then -- (inaudible) -- the Haitian people. What we can expect from the (situation?) right now -- (inaudible)?

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: I think that we will ensure, as our strength increases here, as

we fan out through the city, to ensure that through our presence we can add to the overall stability and secure climate in the city. But you have to understand that the size of the city makes it almost impossible for us to be there at all times, at all places all the time. But within the resources we have in country here, we will -- you will see over the next days our spanning out, further and further out from where we are right now.

Q: Mr. Perry, what about General Cedras? We are to stay here -- (inaudible)?

SEC. PERRY: What did he say?

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: Whether Cedras has to stay here or has to leave the country.

SEC. PERRY: The agreement we made with General Cedras did not require him to

leave the country. We believe he should and we believe that he will.

I want to make one more comment. We have to go on to our next session now. But aside from meeting and talking with the forces here today, we have had a -- General Shalikashvili and I both had an opportunity to meet with and mix with some of the literally thousands of Haitians. And I don't want to come to strong conclusions based on the impressions of that, but it was a very, very friendly and enthusiastic reception. It made us feel very warm and made us feel indeed that we are coming in here as friends and not as invaders.

Thank you very much.

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